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# Bud Fensterwald: He Runs the Town's Other CIA

By Shelby Coffey III

STAT There have been periods when Bernard Fensterwald Jr. has stood near the hot center of power in Washington, when he was quoted and sought by an admiring press corps. Back in 1965, when Fensterwald was general counsel of a Senate subcommittee investigating the abuses of government invasions of privacy he and Bobby Kennedy lashed out at each other in public and in private.

Now Bud Fensterwald's pale eyes narrow slightly when he says "I know what I'm doing is unpopular." What he is doing, aside from private law practice, is pursuing a pastime that has sometimes come to be associated with a legion of fools and opportunists: he is investigating the assassinations of Robert and John Kennedy and of Martin Luther King.

But Bud Fensterwald is no ordinary conspiracy-seeker, looking to turn a fast review of flaws in the Warren Report into an instant paperback and cheap publicity.

These days, he tries to arrive at his offices on 15th street at about "7 o'clock in the morning when things are quiet" to pore over documents addressed to his own CIA—the Committee to Investigate Assassinations. CIA is a loose confederation of people who have written or worked on the various conspiracy theories.

At his own expense Fensterwald took an "8,000 mile junket" last May, traveling to Los Angeles, Dallas, New Orleans, Atlanta and Memphis among other locations. He talked with James Earl Ray's lawyers, examined slides of John Kennedy's assassination, visited with the controversial Jim Garrison, and dozens of others, either fascinated or peripherally (or not so peripherally) connected with the three major political murders of the Sixties.

In a recent brief, breezily-styled "progress report" to his fellow CIA members ("There is no implication at all in the title," says Fensterwald with a bit of a wry grin), the Executive Director declared that funds were "Generally non-existent!!" and

that the venture needed "angels" but none had materialized.

As the report mentions the assortment of famous and obscure Fensterwald had talked with, an optimism emerges—there were a number of "fascinating leads" to be chased after and explored and not enough time to do it all in. But there is always a chance "next trip."

To friends and acquaintances who find Fensterwald's recent activities strange, he replies with the certainty of a man who is utterly convinced of not only the correctness but the need for his work.

He feels there may be more political assassinations if the earlier ones are not solved: He resents the statement of former Chief Justice Earl Warren that there will be things that we will not know about the death of John Kennedy until 2039. "My people don't go in with any preconceived notions," said Fensterwald, "We just look for the inaccuracies." To document them he traveled to London early in November to look into the stay of James Earl Ray in that city. Fensterwald's wife (his second, he was divorced in 1964 from the mother of his four children) always travels with him on these junkets, not so much because she is interested in the assassination, but because "as soon as you say do you want to go . . . my wife is already packing."

He does not feel that there is any immediate physical danger in his consuming avocation; but he has set aside a sum of money for the investigation into his death should he vanish someday. He has also placed copies of his most important evidence in "places that would be very difficult to get to."

This kind of talk upsets some people, particularly those who know of Fensterwald's background—an impeccable blend of a proper Southern Jewish family, trips to Europe as a child, Harvard, Harvard Law, a good World War II record as a Naval Lieutenant and the makings of a

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